



Fire & Fuels Information - 2001

Crews Resume Fire and Fuels Work at Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks

It's fire season in the southern Sierra. For homeowners, it's time to clear vegetation around buildings to protect our families. For fire managers at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, it's also time to deal with hazardous fuels.

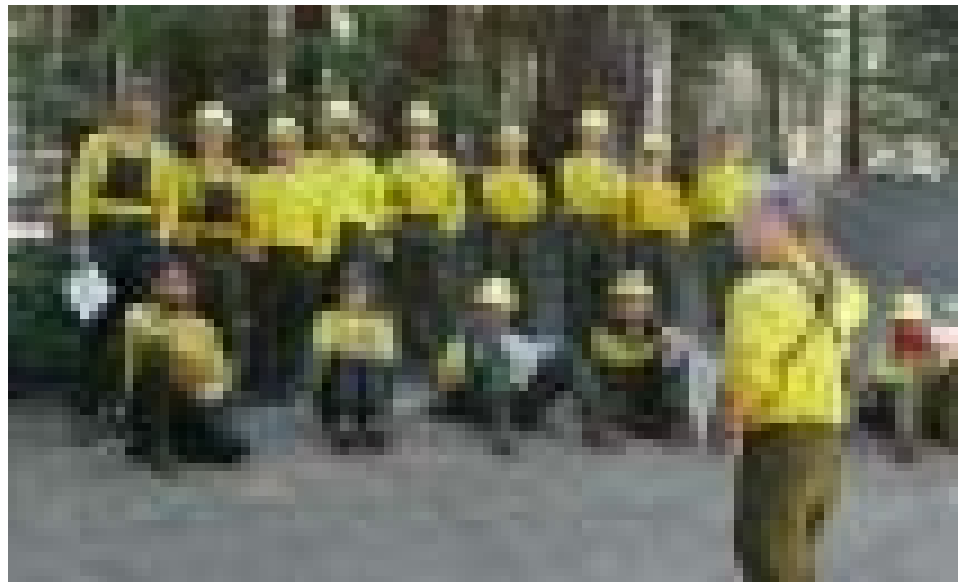
The parks are responsible for over 256,000 acres that currently have an unnaturally high fuel load. As caretakers of these national parks, fire managers use a variety of tools to reduce these hazardous fuels including prescribed burning, mechanical reduction, and wildland fire use.

This year, park employees have already worked on three projects in Sequoia National Park. First, crews weed-whacked acres of grass around developments in the Foothills (including Hospital Rock). Second, heavy fuels were manually removed around the Bearpaw Meadow Ranger Station. Then, on June 25, fire crews ignited the Bear Hill fire in Giant Forest. This was the first prescribed fire in the parks since November 1999.

"We are very pleased with the initial results," says Tom Nichols, Regional Fire Management Officer for the National Park Service's Pacific West Region. "The fire consumed large accumulations of dead and down fuel and created open, sunny spaces for giant sequoia reproduction."

Even though it's early in the season, there are already numerous lightning-caused fires burning in the parks. One recent day, the parks received over 900 lightning strikes. This natural ignition source usually causes an average of 30-40 fires each year. During the 4th of July holiday week, fire crews were busy locating "smokes" and taking appropriate actions to contain or monitor the fires.

Why is the National Park Service committed to



Jeff Manley, prescribed fire burn boss, speaks to firefighters at a morning safety briefing before igniting the 160-acre Bear Hill Prescribed Fire from June 25 to 29.

reducing hazardous fuels? We have known for many years that decades of fire suppression caused large accumulations of fuel in the national parks. In the past, this problem was mostly unnoticed since there was a definite separation between where people lived and "nature." But now, more and more people are moving into the "wildland urban interface." With people living in fire-prone environments, the fuel problem can spell disaster, as was the case in New Mexico, Idaho, and Montana last year.

Responding to the historic fire season of 2000, Congress instituted the National Fire Plan. This plan provides \$2.9 billion dollars for federal firefighting agencies. The funding not only creates many new jobs to increase firefighter preparedness, but also makes large-scale fuel reduction projects across the country possible. These projects directly

benefit people and local communities.

Here at Sequoia and Kings Canyon, National Fire Plan dollars are funding a 219-acre mechanical fuel reduction project in Wilsonia, a private community inside Kings Canyon National Park. This new money is also contributing to a project in the southern Sierra to develop a cooperative planning effort between different agencies. Other ongoing projects will protect Oriole Lake and Silver City (developments in the Mineral King area).

With park headquarters located in Three Rivers, the park staff is proud to be a part of this local community. We work hard not only to protect the local area from devastating wildfires, but also to restore and maintain the beautiful ecosystems that many of us moved to this area to enjoy. We take our jobs seriously and we appreciate your support.



About This Newsletter

Just like the fire triangle depicted above, there are three critical partners necessary for the flow of fire information: park employees, the media, and local communities.

This newsletter, *Fire & Fuels Information*, is designed for the residents of local communities near Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. It demonstrates the parks' commitment to providing quality fire information to its neighbors.

The idea for this newsletter began in 1998 when Three Rivers residents answered a town survey and told the parks they wanted more fire information. The parks responded by maintaining a bulletin board in town and by sending a direct letter to all Three Rivers residents in 1999 and 2000.

This year, we are proud to introduce the new annual mailing. We hope you find *Fire & Fuels Information* informative and useful.

Jody Lyle
Fire Information and Education Specialist

Planning Update

Soon, the parks will be releasing an updated environmental assessment for the Fire and Fuels Management program at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The public is invited to review the document and submit comments.

If you attended a scoping session in the last 2 years, you should already be on the mailing list to receive a copy. If you are not on the list and would like to see the environmental assessment when it is released, please contact Jody Lyle at (559) 565-3703.

Fuel Reduction Projects for Summer/Fall 2001

On June 20, 2001, Superintendent Richard H. Martin approved the proposed annual plan for fuel reduction projects in the parks. This plan includes 15 prescribed burns and 4 mechanical fuel reduction projects totaling a maximum of 7,863 acres (listed in box below).

The burn projects depend on many factors that can change over the course of the season. Fire managers will monitor fuel moistures, weather, air quality, and the availability of firefighting resources.

The parks typically achieve 40-60% of the acres proposed each year. This year with new project planning requirements and staffing changes, the parks will probably fall below this average range of accomplishments.

After evaluating the escaped prescribed fire in Bandelier National Monument last year, the Na-

tional Park Service has instituted changes in the agency's prescribed burn policies and planning practices. Many of these new requirements have already been a part of Sequoia and Kings Canyon's burn plan process for a number of years. One change for these parks, however, is the "technical review" process by a fire professional outside Sequoia and Kings Canyon. While this prolongs the preparation of new burn plans and creates an enormous workload to update old ones, it is a positive and valuable addition to our program.

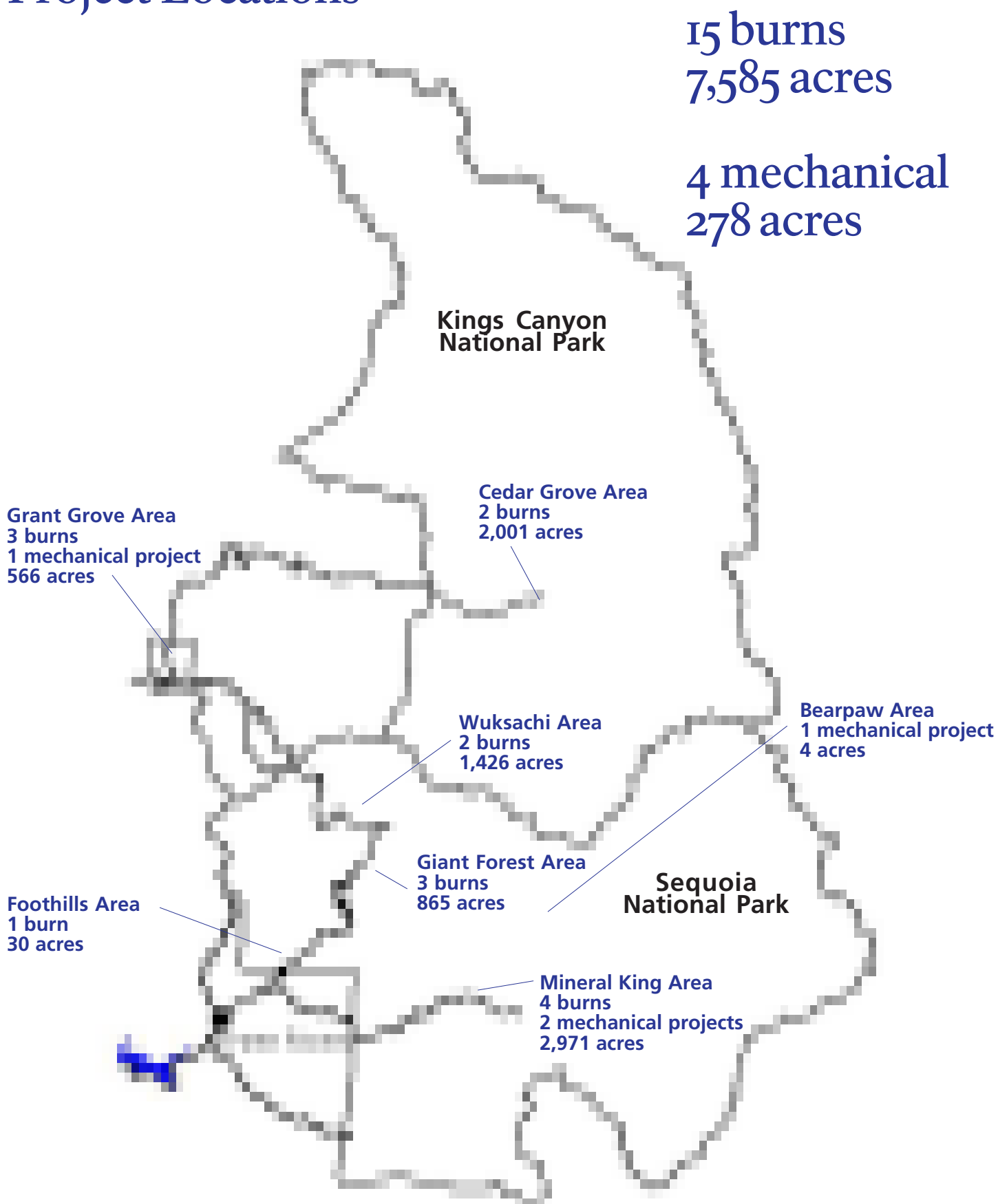
There are four mechanical fuel reduction projects on the list below. Located in Silver City, Oriole Lake, Bearpaw, and Wilsonia, these projects will take place in the field and benefit the named facilities or communities. Not listed, there is an interagency planning project called the Southern Sierra Geographic Information Cooperative (SSGIC). SSGIC will not have field accomplishments this year.

Area	Project Name	Acres
Foothills	HQ/Hospital Rock	30
Mineral King	Lookout	1,516
Mineral King	Redwood	500
Mineral King	Deadwood	400
Mineral King	Tar Gap	500
Mineral King	Silver City*	40
Mineral King	Oriole Lake*	15
Giant Forest	✓ Bear Hill	160
Giant Forest	Highway or Tharp's	493
Giant Forest	Sherman Creek	212
Bearpaw	✓ Bearpaw*	4
Wuksachi	Willow	922
Wuksachi	A,B,C,D	504
Grant Grove	Sunset (D)	106
Grant Grove	Cedar Springs	48
Grant Grove	"G"	193
Grant Grove	Wilsonia*	219
Cedar Grove	Cheat Grass Plots	1
Cedar Grove	Lewis Creek	2,000

*Mechanical Fuel Reduction Projects

✓ Project is Finished

Project Locations





National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks
47050 Generals Highway
Three Rivers, CA 93271-9651

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The National Park Service cares for the
special places saved by the American people
so that all may experience our heritage.

For More Information

There are many ways to keep informed about fire and fuels activities in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks:

Read the park maintained bulletin board in Three Rivers next to the Village Market. Information is also posted at the Totem and the Post Office.

Listen to a recorded fire information message by calling 565-3341. Press 9, then 4, then 3.

Visit the park fire situation website for updated weather, air district burn days, crew assignments, and fire narratives.
<http://fire.nifc.nps.gov/fire/seki/amreport.htm>

Call Jody Lyle, Fire Information and Education Specialist at (559) 565-3703.